

2018 All-America City Award Application

Spotlight: Promoting Equity through Inclusive Civic Engagement

Community Name and State:
Kershaw County, South Carolina

Your community is applying as a:
County

Has your community applied before?
No

Has your community been a finalist before?
No

Has your community been an All-American City before?
No

Contact Information:

Laurey Carpenter, Board Chair
Place of Learning for Active Youth (PLAY) Foundation

Address:	Phone:	Email:
PO Box 883 Lugoff, SC 29078	864-934-5858	LSC864@gmail.com

This applying community will receive a complimentary membership (or membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?

Name: Vic Carpenter, County Administrator

Address: 515 Walnut Street

City, State & Zip Code: Camden, SC 29020

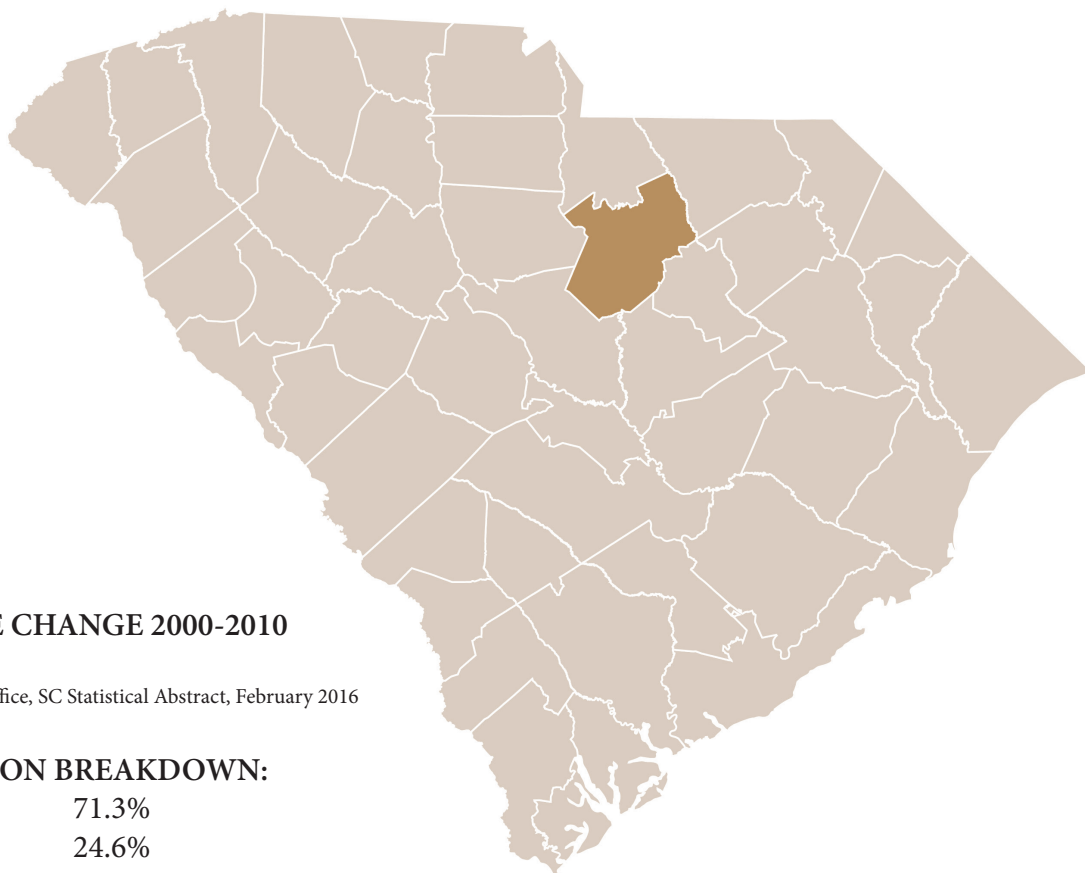
Phone Number: 803-425-1501

Email: Vic.Carpenter@Kershaw.sc.gov

We agree to follow NCL's rules regarding the use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League. We all NCL and the All-America City Award to share this application and the information enclosed in it with the NCL and AAC networks to promote the work of our community. If we are named an All-America City, we agree to conduct a post-AAC conference call or regional forum for the AAC network that features projects. In a pay-it-forward spirit, if named a finalist or All-America City, we agree to consider supporting AAC through an NCL membership for a minimum of the next three Years.

Signature: _____ Date: February 28, 2018

Name: Laurey Carpenter Title: Board Chair, PLAY Foundation



POPULATION: 61,697

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 2000-2010

(indicate + or -): +17.2%

Source/Date: S.C. Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, SC Statistical Abstract, February 2016

RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN:

White	71.3%
Black or African American	24.6%
Hispanic	3.7%
Other Races	4.1%

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$52,112 (2014)

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 ACS

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL:

17.8% (2014)

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 ACS

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE:

4.2% (2017)

Source/Date: S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (2017)

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP:

17 years old and under	23.9%
18-24	7.9%
25-44	23.5%
45-64	29.2%
65 and over	15.4%

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 ACS

PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP:

77.6%

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 ACS

WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION – Name the three largest employment sectors (include military services and/or installations, if any) in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:

Manufacturing	21.1%
Retail Trade	17.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	14.2%

Source/Date: S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (2017)

Part 1:

How Equitable are opportunities in your Community?

Kershaw County works hard to ensure that all races, cultures and faiths have a voice and have equity in decisions that affect the livelihood of our residents. One area that has been changing in regards to equity is the demographics of our elected officials. Kershaw County has three municipalities: Bethune, Camden and Elgin. All of these municipalities have women representation on their councils. Camden and Elgin's city council are 60% women. In 2016, Camden elected their first African-American female mayor, Mrs. Alfred Mae Drakeford. Similarly, the Kershaw County School Board Chairman, Dr. James Smith, is an African-American. While our county council is currently made up entirely of men, our diverse community is reflected by representation on appointed boards and commissions.

Local leadership, elected officials and the voter base are engaged to ensure that economic opportunities are available to industries looking to call Kershaw County home. Through a school bond referendum, an economic development investment from county council, and hard work from the Kershaw County and City of Camden Economic Development departments, businesses have invested over \$200 million and created 550 jobs in our county since 2015. With these added economic opportunities, our residents can find quality jobs and our county can offer additional services, improving the quality of life for all residents.

City and county leadership also work hand-in-hand with local nonprofit agencies to ensure that we are reaching all cultures in our community. With our Hispanic/Latino population ever increasing, The ALPHA Behavioral Health Center created the Entre Amigos Program. The center provides interpretation and translation services to this growing Latino community. In addition, every August, The ALPHA Center, in partnership with various communities in the county, hosts a multicultural festival. At the festival, community organizations, county services and vendors are available for the Hispanic/Latino community to educate citizens about available services and assist the individuals and/or families on how to utilize these services. The Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County also reaches out to various cultures in our community. Their multi-cultural committee works to ensure that our cultural arts are displayed and cherished. In addition, they have a program that introduces art to underprivileged children. They also host Gospel Fest and in partnership with our school district, introduce chamber music to elementary age children.

Our most recent effort in preserving our heritage is the African-American Cultural Center of Camden, which is being launched by the City of Camden Archives and Museum system. The Archives has worked extensively to produce exhibits and materials that encompass the many facets of Camden's cultural heritage. Camden currently has five locations listed in the Green Book of South Carolina, a travel guide to all of South Carolina's African-American cultural sites.



As a rapidly growing community, torn between its rural past and a suburban future, Kershaw County is dealing with the fact that its public infrastructure is decaying, and in many cases is no longer adequate to meet the needs of its citizens. To better understand what those needs are, Kershaw County has, in the last three years, completed detailed infrastructure studies on its parks, recreation and green spaces; trails and bikeways; roads and bridges and economic development properties. Additionally, the county completed a 10-year update of its Comprehensive Plan and created VisionKershaw 2030, a plan with goals and strategies meant to be realized over 15 years (see Project 3).

Each study ensured inclusion of all communities, neighborhoods, ages, gatherings of faith and educational institutions. This was accomplished by working with community leaders, with special attention being given to communities that may have been marginalized or left out of discussions in the past. Dozens of public meetings and public hearings were held. Online and written surveys were collected, and translation and written interpreters were made available. One of the outcomes of these efforts resulted in prioritization of recreational facility upgrades and construction. Upgraded facilities include a new city arena, gymnasium and park upgrades, swimming complex upgrades, a new walking/biking trail and the construction of multiple baseball fields, soccer fields, pickle ball and tennis courts.

Our county's main hurdle to equity is our geography. Our rural county lacks public transportation for residents to travel from the far rural unincorporated communities to the county seat, Camden, for needed services. Local nonprofit organizations and boards have taken ownership of this issue and have offered solutions. Specifically, the United Way of Kershaw County has established a Mobile Nutrition Center as well as networks through the local churches to ensure that fresh, nutritional foods are provided to underserved populations. In addition, the local Board of Disabilities offers transportation to its clients. This transportation is critical in that it enables disabled residents to attend medical appointments and have reliable means to maintain a job. Finally, the Regional Transportation Authority offers limited bus routes to the closest Social Security Administration office, which is 40 miles away. City and county government entities and local nonprofit agencies are proactively finding unique solutions to provide needed services to our underserved unincorporated communities.

Kershaw County is a small community with a large heart. There is a concerted effort that all demographics are considered when conversations are held about the future of our county. When gaps are identified, and solutions need to be made, all affected parties are involved in and made aware of the decisions. Kershaw County encourages and welcomes diverse community engagement.



Part 2: Tell Your Community's Story.



It's a great day in Kershaw County, and our community is consistently engaged in improving its quality of life. Our elected officials have taken steps to improve the infrastructure in our industrial parks by approving \$22 million dollars in economic and workforce development investments. This allowed for the construction of a new campus for our technical college (CCTC), as well as the construction of needed spec buildings and incubator space.

Our voters approved a \$129,000,000 Bond Referendum for education that will build new elementary schools and renovate existing middle and high schools. This bond will also build a state of the art Advanced Technology Education Center (ATEC), co-located beside the new college campus and Workforce Development Center. This joint-use campus – a collaboration between the County, the School District and the State, will offer a unique resource that enables our students to have a seamless education providing critical job skills capable of meeting the needs of local industry. Additionally, the Technical College, School District, County and the City of Camden have collaborated to offer free tuition at CCTC for two years to all Kershaw County high school graduates with a 2.5 GPA. This program, the Kershaw County Scholar Program, is offered through CCTC and is one of the first of its kind offered in South Carolina. Other technical colleges in South Carolina are now looking at our collaboration and using us as a model in their area. In just its third year, the program enrolled over 300 Kershaw County students.

We recognize that we are a diverse county with many different needs, so all areas work together to ensure that those essential needs are met. Recently, when Elgin, a town in the suburban western portion of our county was able to purchase a new fleet of police vehicles, they donated the best of the replaced vehicles to the Bethune Police Department, a very small town in the rural eastern portion of our county. Bethune, struggling to meet needs with minimal resources, did not have the means to allow them to purchase a vehicle. Such solutions occur every day in Kershaw County. Our towns and services areas are separated geographically; however, we are considered one when it comes to the essential needs of our county.

Our local shelter, Food for the Soul, has seen those needs and has taken a proactive approach in addressing them. Recognizing that hunger and homelessness exist here, they are now open seven days a week, providing safe shelter and meals to all who need it. Furthermore, realizing that hunger exists outside city limits, they now provide mobile meals to the most rural and undeveloped areas of our county. And now, they serve as the designated Special Needs shelter for those most vulnerable in our society.

In all we do, we prove that it is a Great Day in Kershaw County.



Part 3: Describe Civic Engagement in your Community.



Civic engagement is a part of the Kershaw County community culture, our DNA.

Community Vision & Pride

One of our projects with the most engagement was in the creation of a shared vision and plan for the future. In 2015, Kershaw County completed its first ever vision plan, VisionKershaw 2030, a 15-year guide to moving our community into a future that reflects the passions, needs and desires of all who call Kershaw County home. This plan was developed through dozens of community listening sessions. An inclusive core group of citizens provided leadership, while an even larger steering committee ensured proper focus and direction.

In all plans, projects and services, Kershaw County strives to be a more accurate reflection of our citizens and businesses. Transparency and accessibility are our goals - from hiring practices that endeavor to ensure all communities are aware of job vacancies, to ensuring that residents are better informed about the location and occurrence of public forums and official meetings.

Specifically, Kershaw County makes all job postings available to local entities such as churches, the Department of Social Services, the local United Way, senior centers, libraries and community websites. Senior level position openings, such as department heads, or professional employee openings, such as engineers or accountants, are also sent to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). In addition, city and county policies require that all bids for goods and services must be posted online, as well as sent out to trade groups, chambers of commerce and professional associations. To support local businesses, and to encourage businesses owned by women and/or minorities, special consideration is given during the procurement process.

The community was especially proud when the Kershaw County School District (KCSD) worked to ensure equity among local contractors when accepting bids for the construction of three new school buildings and numerous renovations to school facilities. In selecting the five general contractors for the projects, special consideration was given to those contractors who would give local businesses a legitimate opportunity to bid on the work. After the general contractors were selected, a “job fair” was held to reach out to local sub-contractors. “The job fair was co-hosted by the Kershaw County Chamber of Commerce and was advertised broadly in local media. General contractors set up booths and local vendors submitted their information. Later, these local vendors received a personal invitation to come to the pre-bid meetings for each project, as well as an opportunity to bid on the projects. To date, more than \$15 million has been awarded to local vendors,” said Billy Smith, KCSD Executive Director of Operations.

Public Participation

The desire to further explore civic engagement within our community led to the PLAY (Place of Learning for Active Youth) Foundation Board coordinating workshops in May 2017. Every effort was made to ensure that the workshops were all-inclusive, and included representatives from government, non-profit, business, religious and community entities. The workshops were designed to start a dialogue among community members to discover gaps and inequities within our community. We showed participants highlights of all the great things that have happened in Kershaw County over the past several years. From there, we explored our community’s recent projects and activities. Workshop facilitators encouraged participants to view our community’s activities through the perspective of promoting equity through inclusive civic engagement. The workshops exceeded our expectations. Each event lasted an hour and half and allowed us to interact with dozens of community members. The dialogue allowed us to gauge the current state of our community.



“Civic engagement is a part of the Kershaw County community culture, our DNA.”



Inclusiveness & Collaboration

Yet for all that is accomplished by listening to the dreams and desires of a community, there are still some realities that also need to be addressed. Several years ago, a senseless murder of a high school student revealed the fact that gang violence had infiltrated our community. Out of that tragedy emerged a community-wide initiative determined to ensure that the violence and false promises of the life represented by gang culture did not take root in our community. The church, education, and law enforcement communities, along with counseling and addiction resources, United Way agencies, social service and youth-serving agencies all began an, at times, painful and introspective study of who we are as a community – and what we need to do in order to provide a better future for our youth.

Out of this initiative came forth numerous permanent outcomes, including a teen center, School Resource Officers, and rapid identification of at-risk teens. A large, multi-year grant was received from the Duke Endowment to further allow these new institutions and resources the necessary time to become permanent.

Decision Making & Consensus-Building

Equally critical to another community was the fear that their local elementary school – the last remaining vestige of a rural community that had slowly disappeared over the last century - would be closed. Economics and “common sense” said that it had to be consolidated with another school, as it was far more cost efficient. Yet, when this small rural community made clear the depth of their fear and the pain that they felt, our county stopped, listened, and reversed course. Through many months of open dialogue, a compromise was reached that not only saved the school, but resulted in an additional \$1 million commitment to upgrade the school and help address the inequity that was revealed.

It is in this type of effort that Kershaw County truly excels. We have learned to solve our problems by talking face-to-face, and coming to agreement on common, shared solutions. We celebrate our minority cultures with festivals and public celebrations. We listen to ideas and concerns when we plan projects – and change them to incorporate critical aspects, important to a culture or neighborhood but perhaps overlooked by others.

Part 4: Describe Three Community-driven Projects.



Project 1 - Health & Wellness

Projects that focus on building healthcare equity in our community are being led by our Community Medical Clinic (CMC). For 17 years, the CMC has provided medical care for our neighbors who are underserved or uninsured in Kershaw County. Today CMC plays an increasingly broad role as the leader of a collaborative effort to improve population health throughout the county. The clinic serves as the medical home to 800 county residents, resulting in approximately 3,600 patient visits annually. These services are provided by:

1. Efficient, effective and innovative spending that enables the clinic to operate on \$500,000 annually. That investment results in \$5.7 million of free care for Kershaw County residents, including dental care, primary and specialty medical care services, preventative screenings, assistance with medications and mental health care.
2. More than 200 active community volunteers, who contribute 10,000 hours each year.
3. Treatment of not only medical conditions but also assistance with other aspects of patients daily lives that impact their ability to take care of themselves. Only when these factors are addressed simultaneously can our residents pursue the steps toward healthy living.

CMC has expanded its mission beyond the walls of the medical facility, launching a program called LiveWell Kershaw, a population-based care approach to improving health outcomes in Kershaw County. The vision of this effort is to make Kershaw County the healthiest county in South Carolina, based on the County Health Rankings compiled annually by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Population Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin.

In collaboration with the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina, as well as the SC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), LiveWell Kershaw began with a county-wide health assessment followed by the development of a health improvement plan. Eat Smart/Move More Kershaw County and the KershawHealth hospital system provided start-up funding for this effort. The start-up funding period was from May 1, 2014 – June 31, 2017.

From data gathered in meetings and through online surveys, LiveWell Kershaw discovered a health crisis occurring in the northeastern part of the county. This is an underpopulated rural region of our county that includes six major zip codes. Through this study, CMC learned that the key determinant of a person's health is where they live or their zip code. People get sick from the social circles in which they travel and the physical environments they visit during the course of their day-to-day activities. Categorizing the data by zip code uncovered areas of concern and identified strategies that could be implemented.

The LiveWell Kershaw initiative provides significant resources to zip codes where a disproportionate number of residents suffer from more than one chronic illness and 26% of the residents are uninsured. Additionally, the population in this area is 21% below the poverty level. Between May 2014 and May 2017, a total of 2,471 students and adults received assistance, totaling 4,749 encounters. Fifty-six percent of the uninsured population in the northeastern part of the county received services, equating to 1,812 residents.

LiveWell Kershaw employed three strategies to improve the health outcomes of the residents living in the northeastern area of Kershaw County. Each strategy has an effect on improving health, while helping to reduce the health costs for this population sector. The strategies are as follows:

“

Unexcused absences can lead to failure of a grade, as well as monetary penalty. Eight percent failed due to unexcused absences. Having a nurse practitioner on site, allows the child to receive a medically excused absence, which has improved our graduation rates.”

- Rose Montgomery, NCHS Asst. Principal

STRATEGY 1 - School Based Health Center (SBHC)

The LiveWell Kershaw leadership believed that a SBHC was needed to provide health and acute care services to the identified region. Phase one began in February 2015 and included the provision of mental health services at North Central High School through a partnership with the University of South Carolina's Department of Community Psychology. Specifically, participants were provided one-on-one counseling, mentoring parent sessions, consultations and support groups. In August 2015, the SBHC Advisory Council convened for the first time, and implemented sports physicals and health screenings for students. In phase two, beginning in January 2016, a Nurse Practitioner began seeing students at the high school two days a week, after renovations of an office close to the school's gym were completed. In April 2016, a Certified Medical Assistant joined the Nurse Practitioner at the school. Phase three began in August 2017 with the expansion of services to include North Central Middle School. These students are provided transportation to the high school. Office hours were also expanded from two days to four days a week.

The SBHC has 51% of middle school students and 73% of high school students from the northeastern area visiting the SBHC. Since February 2015, a total of 126 clinical hours and 207 mental health visits have been provided. In addition, 151 students and 30 teachers were mentored by mental health facilitators and three grief groups were supported at the school. As a result of supplemental mental health services being provided, counselors reported that 80% of the participants have shown improvement in increased attention span in class and completion of homework, as well as fewer disciplinary referrals. Acute care services were offered from January 2016 - May 2017 to 157 high school students and 84 middle school students, and 125 sports physicals and 382 sick visits were conducted.

For many students, getting a physical at school has allowed them to participate in extra curricular opportunities that were not previously possible to them. Maddie had expressed a desire to play softball at school. She had an opportunity as an 8th grader to play JV ball at the high school. Maddie had never played in team sports at school. Maddie's father did not have the money for sports physical. The SBHC nurse practitioner gave her sports physical for free and referred her to Rotary project, Happy Feet for a free pair of cleats. Both Maddie and her father expressed their gratitude and was noticed by faculty that Maddie was more engaged in school and had high spirits.

Staff members noted decreased absenteeism, and improved attitudes among those students receiving mental health services, as well as increased participation in sports and extracurricular activities, ultimately directly correlating to an increase in graduation rates. According to North Central High Assistant Principal Rose Montgomery, the improvements directly resulting from the SBHC have resulted in a remarkable reduction of failures due to excessive unexcused absences, as many parents are unable to get their child to the doctor for an excuse. “Unexcused

absences can lead to failure of a grade, as well as monetary penalty. Eight percent failed due to unexcused absences. Having a nurse practitioner on site, allows the child to receive a medically excused absence, which has improved our graduation rates,” said Montgomery.

During a parent focus group, parents expressed appreciation for not having to drive their child over 40 minutes away to be seen by a medical provider. Two of the parents commented that their employer does not allow time off for sick visits, and credited the LiveWell Kershaw program for helping them keep their jobs. The administrators at both schools are very pleased with the SBHC and consider the team integral to providing quality education to their students.

The SBHC has made a huge impact on the students in the northeastern area of our school district in terms of attendance and academic achievement. It goes without saying that students learn best when they are at school and ready to learn. One of only three SBHC’s in the country, run by a free medical clinic, our health center has been a tremendous success in terms of helping break down health-related barriers to learning. The integration of mental health services and acute care services at the school is a model that can be replicated in other middle and high schools in Kershaw County.

STRATEGY 2 - Care Coordination

In an effort to increase access to health care, the CMC created a care coordination team, consisting of Nurse Practitioners, Community Care Coordinators, Medical Assistants, Community Navigators, a Mental Health Counselor, a Pharmacy Assistant and Community Health Workers. Using a scatter map showing the addresses of patients with high emergency room visits, the team identified satellite health care locations, throughout the underserved zip codes, that were strategically placed to provide access within a 10 mile radius of the underserved residents’ homes. One town hall and multiple area churches were chosen as the satellite locations. Care coordination services include, but are not limited to, personal coaching to help coordinate one’s care, assistance finding a primary care provider, medical treatment and mental health counseling, assistance in managing medications, enrollment in other social assistance programs and health coaching using a certified curriculum.

The care coordination team uses both the electronic health record (IMS), and the Community Hub and Pathway software to systematically track the outcomes of each pathway assigned to a patient. Over the three year project period (2014-2017), the care coordination team assisted nearly 2,500 patients, with a total of nearly 5,000 encounters. The team also made 1,886 phone calls to patients in that area who were using the emergency room as their primary care medical provider (information provided by the Emergency Department at KershawHealth). The goal during these calls was to help residents better manage their chronic illnesses outside of the emergency department, resulting in decreased cost for health care services in our community.

A transitional care program was also launched in June 2016 with 48 patients enrolled. This program provides in-depth case management for uninsured inpatients at KershawHealth to reduce readmissions to the hospital. One of the main goals of the program is to connect residents of the northeastern area to a medical home - which is often the Community Medical Clinic (at one of their 8 satellite clinics) or Sandhills Medical Foundation (a federally-qualified health center). A total of 608 residents were connected to a medical home from 2014-2017. In addition, the team submitted 548 Prescription Assistance applications, 310 SNAP applications, and 323 Medicaid applications and made over 466 referrals for medical care and social services support. Through the use of care coordination teams and satellite health care locations, residents of the northeastern area of our county receive equitable holistic and client-centered care.

“Y’all are a God-send! I’m so glad you’re here!”

- Ricky Lee Hough

LiveWell Kershaw Beneficiary



STRATEGY 3 - Organizational and Community Capacity

For this strategy to be successful, the LiveWell Kershaw leadership team recognized that both internal capacity and community capacity needed to be bolstered in order to create a culture that promotes population health. This resulted in the development of various training programs related to population health and health equity with the Community Medical Clinic’s board of directors, community advisory members, staff members, volunteers, and also community partners and leaders. The CEO of the Community Medical Clinic, Susan Witkowski, sought guidance and resources from local, state (South Carolina Hospital Association, University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health) and national partners (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Care Coordination Systems, School-Based Health Alliance). Some of the training programs that have occurred over the past three years include quarterly staff and board training, “Food for Thought” community meetings, and a county-wide population health summit with over 100 attendees.

One of the most significant and impactful programs is the health equity bus tours. These tours focus on community health statistics and patient challenges and successes as well as the clinic’s approach to expanding their health care services. Not only do these tours educate the participants, but they also create additional opportunities for donations and grants, as well as a business focus on wellness activities. Additional support has come from organizations and businesses outside of the northeastern service area, showing the incredible support and “helping our neighbor” philosophy of our community. Over 6,265 individuals have been reached through these activities. From the various programs and events, board and community members have adopted a broad view of health and recognize the impact a person’s zip code has on one’s health outcomes more so than their genetic code or Body Mass Index.

LiveWell Kershaw was such a success that the CMC has expanded their mission and vision to not only care for the uninsured of Kershaw County but all underserved populations. One of the six strategies in the Clinic’s 2016-2018 strategic plan is to be the recognized leader in population health in Kershaw County through community outreach and engagement. In addition to joining the 100 Million Healthier Lives Campaign and the Pathway to Pacesetter program funded through the Robert Wood Johnson Program, LiveWell Kershaw has been honored as one of the five SC communities to receive Duke Endowment funding for increased capacity building through Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas grant. The Community Medical Clinic of Kershaw County has positioned itself as a local and state leader for the execution of population health strategies through the adoption of local and national tools and practices that can be scaled throughout the entire county.

Project Contact:

Susan Witkowski, CHCQM

Community Medical Clinic of Kershaw County

110 C East DeKalb Street Camden, SC 29020

803-713-0806 ext 402

switkowski@cmcofkc.org

Project 2 - Children & Education

Kershaw County citizens recognize the importance of children and education to the future of our community. The Kershaw County School District (KCS D) serves 10,495 students in twenty schools including eleven Pre K-5th grade schools, four 6-8th grade schools, three 9-12th grade schools, an alternative school (for students who have fallen behind in their studies and/or have been expelled) and a high school applied technology campus. Over the last 5-10 years, our families have become more complex. They are affected by more fluid family compositions (blended/mixed/extended families, military deployment, children raising themselves), chronic emotional or mental illness, substance abuse, and other issues.

Unfortunately, in 2007 these challenges became very clear when a 17-year-old student, Michael Joseph Smith, died in a gang-related shooting. Destroying the sense of safety previously felt by residents, this incident predicted a future filled with youth violence in our county and spurred discussions on how to protect our families and communities. A group of collaborating state and private agencies worked with the community on a diverse and comprehensive planning process which led to school district to apply for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, which is funded by the Department of Education, the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services. The grant was intended to prevent violence and the illegal use of drugs and to promote safety and discipline.

Specifically, in 2009, KCS D was awarded over \$1.4 million in Safe Schools funds, totaling \$4.7 million over a 5-year period. The KCS D Safe Schools project was integrated into all of the district's schools. This funding provided security equipment, School Resource Officers, positive behavior supports, truancy prevention staff, parenting support, Youth Court and school-based mental health counselors. Many local agencies collaborated on the project including The ALPHA Behavioral Health Center, Kershaw County Sheriff's Office, SC Department of Juvenile Justice, Santee-Wateree Mental Health Center, Kershaw County First Steps, the United Way of Kershaw County, City of Camden Police Department, Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands, Camden First United Methodist Church, and Camp Emmanuel.

The Safe Schools program enabled KCS D to integrate five key elements:

- Element One: Safe School Environments and Violence Prevention Activities
- Element Two: Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Prevention (ATOD) Activities
- Element Three: Student Behavioral, Social and Emotional Support
- Element Four: Mental Health Services
- Element Five: Early Childhood Social and Emotional Learning Programs

The project served a total of 3,112 students, equaling 31% of the district's students. Thirty percent of participating students received services from more than one Safe Schools program, including 25 students who received services from five or more programs. Services ranged in intensity and included, but were not limited to, assessments, after school programs, truancy intervention, and school-based mental health counseling. Participating students received a total of 5,196 distinct services, an average of 1.7 services per student. The three largest programs (transitions and truancy, afterschool programming and school-based mental health) accounted for 64% of all services.

Most of the programs focused on behavioral, social and mental health needs (with the exception of out of school programming), but the behavioral indicators were of most interest. Indicators included unexcused absences, suspensions, and disciplinary codes, such as refusal to obey, disrespect and bus violations. The conclusion from the

“Over the past few years, the community has recognized several needs that could not be met by one entity. Therefore, we pooled our resources and expertise and made these important projects happen.”

analyses was that while programming did not eradicate problem behavior, services were successful in reducing the incidents of these behaviors. Throughout the program, the school district and eleven other agencies interacted, collaborated, and recognized that there was a need to engage our youth to increase their self-esteem and self-worth and to ensure they are engaged in non-violent behavior.

Another successful program that emerged from Safe Schools and continues to thrive is the Jackson Teen Center. In 2013, the area Boys and Girls Club and KCSD collaborated to create a teen center. The school district had a facility that included a small auditorium and a dilapidated gym that showed great potential for this center. Community response was strong, with citizens raising funds and collecting furnishings, allowing the center to open in the summer of 2014. The World Venture Foundation also provided funding for a new floor in the center's gymnasium, with other community partners purchasing bleachers, new basketball goals, and paint for the facility.

A director was appointed to develop a program that mixed fun and recreation with serious academic, personal growth and career development initiatives. One of the most unique programs offered through the center is music production. A production studio was set up, which has enabled members to learn about music and music production. The production studio received a grant through the Columbia-based Hootie and the Blowfish Foundation that supported the production of a CD of both original and other songs performed and produced by the center's teens. In addition, the center partners with the county's Step Team and the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice to deliver the "Job Readiness for Teens" (JRT) program, which is an after-school and summer employability skills training program for at-risk high school students.

Furthermore, the center's summer program focuses on academics through reading development and SAT/ACT prep sessions, as well as field trips, recreational and arts activities. Entering into its fourth year, the center has served over 1,057 teens, making it one of the largest teen center programs in the southeast. Teens participate in activities focusing on character building, teamwork, and leadership, all designed to empower youth. Since the Jackson Teen Center began its programs, teens have exhibited the following:

- 98% are on track to complete high school and continue their education
- 87% are receiving A's & B's on their report cards
- 58% are less likely to engage in sexual activity before age 15
- 76% are less likely to use drugs or alcohol
- 80% are less likely to engage in violent behavior than their peers

Because of the success of the Safe Schools grant, KCSD was selected to participate in the Project to Learn About Youth – Mental Health, in collaboration with the University of South Carolina and the U.S. Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention. This project refocused priorities on school counseling programs, restructured the alternative school, established virtual programs at high schools, and added an early entrance into adult education, as well as hired five rehabilitative behavioral health services (RBHS) counselors and a clinical psychologist to assess, diagnose, and counsel students who need services.

An example of the success of the community's efforts through these programs is found in Hope Gumbs. Hope attended Camden High School but struggled with skills for life and therefore, was enrolled in the district's alternative school – the Continuous Learning Center (CLC). At the CLC, she benefitted from the services of the district's RBHS counselors and their Girl's Empowerment Group. In this group, teens discussed issues and situations they struggled with at their prior schools. Hope displayed leadership by setting strong goals for herself and identifying how she planned to achieve these goals. Hope identified solutions for issues facing her once she transitioned back to her high school. Due to the assistance of her RBHS counselors, Hope was able to successfully transition back to her home school and thrive because she learned coping skills that allowed her to handle various interpersonal problems.

Hope also joined the Jackson Teen Center and through their music production program recorded a three-song CD called "Hope." She also entertained at the Job Readiness Training celebration at the center in May 2017 and was featured in a story for our local newspaper. Hope graduated from Camden High and now attends Morris College. Hope's resolve and willingness to change her direction in life is inspiring to all who know her story!

Kershaw County is also focusing efforts on a different group of students that we expect will be future community leaders. One program is called Junior Leadership Kershaw County. This is a partnership with the Kershaw Chamber of Commerce, KCSD, and Camden Military Academy. Up to 32 high school students are selected to participate in this program, which offers hands-on leadership opportunities. Another partnership between Kershaw County, Central Carolina Technical College (CCTC), and KCSD is the development of a joint education and economic development campus which will include an expanded CCTC facility, a new high school career and technical center, adult education, and the county's Economic Development Office. This collaboration strongly enhances workforce preparation and continuing education in Kershaw County and greatly increases the county's overall capacity to attract industry and businesses to the community. Many local organizations and businesses are strong supporters of these initiatives.



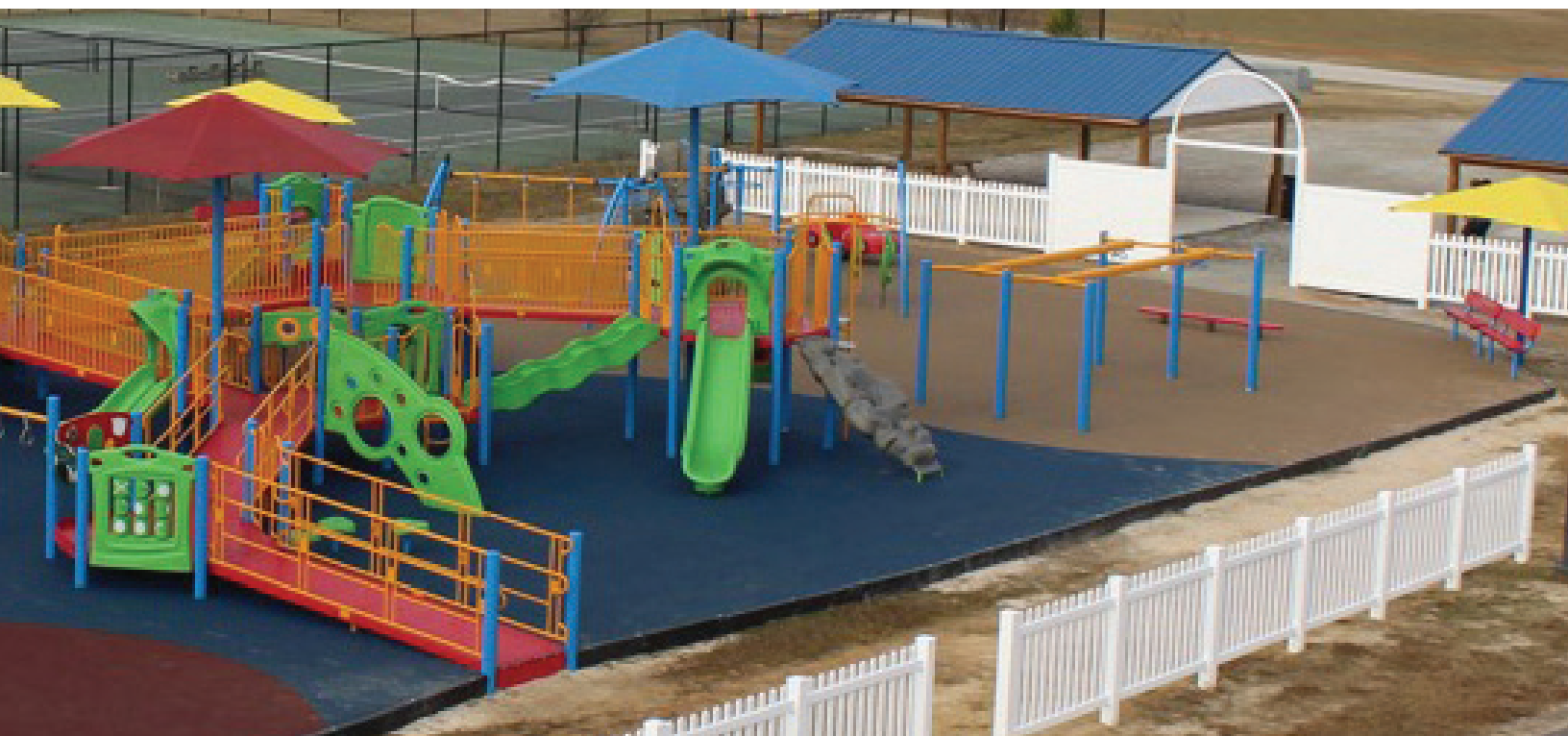
Another challenge that the community decided to address is recreational needs for children that affect their health and education. It had been 15 years since any playground equipment or play areas were updated in Kershaw County. Families with special needs children, which make up 11.2 % of the student population, had to travel more than 35 miles to an accessible playground. Through focus groups, surveys, and public meetings, the rendering of a state-of-the-art playground was developed. The playground plans were verified for compatibility with state and federal guidelines; meeting standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). A group of volunteers led the project and developed, fundraised (\$300,000) and built the ADA accessible playground in a 14-month timeframe. It is the first ADA compliant playground in Kershaw County and one of only 15 in the Midlands area (an 11-county region). The playground is one of the largest in the Midlands and only one of two using rubberized surfacing for the ground material. With the accessible ADA playground, families can stay close to home and provide another outlet for their children to play, exercise, improve health, and become comfortable with their environment.

These community leaders have now created a formal non-profit organization, PLAY (Place of Learning for Active Youth) Foundation. The foundation continues to increase the quality of life in Kershaw County while enhancing the physical and social development of our youth. Their current project is building a Farmers' Market Pavilion in downtown Camden that will include a community garden with educational space.

Over the past few years, the community has recognized several needs that could not be met by one entity. Therefore, we pooled our resources and expertise and made these important projects happen. In Kershaw County, the ethos of the community is to figure out how to work together to improve the future for all of our children.

Project Contact:
Dr. Frank Morgan
Superintendent

Kershaw County School District
2029 West DeKalb Street
Camden, SC 29020
(803) 432-8416
frank.morgan@kcsdschools.net



Project 3 - VisionKershaw 2030

In early 2015, Kershaw County Council envisioned a plan capable of uniting our citizens and preparing our county for the future. Out of that discussion arose Kershaw County Council's request to the Kershaw County Planning and Zoning Department to put together a plan called VisionKershaw 2030. The plan is available online at <http://www.visionkershaw2030.org/>

At the heart of this visioning process was a robust gathering of community input, conducted to collect ideas and attitudes from county residents, community leaders and business owners. The public engagement process was widely advertised, through various methods including a dedicated website, press releases, direct mailings, flyers, newspaper articles and word of mouth. A concerted effort was made to reach a diverse segment of the population.

The process, conducted from July to December 2015, included over 32 outreach events conducted by the Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments and county planning staff. Events were held at volunteer fire stations, churches, government buildings, and schools. Also, staff offered workshops to a diverse cross section of organizations, including the local NAACP chapter and our youth leaders. Additionally, materials were made available in Spanish, and staff was on-hand to answer questions during the annual multi-cultural festival. Over 170 individuals attended these events, which included presentations, idea-generating exercises, listening sessions, and workshop discussions. Of the attendees, over 60% were female, approximately 15% were minorities, and every age demographic was represented. The workshop discussions that informed VisionKershaw 2030 were organized around the S.W.O.T. analysis tool (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). In each workshop, residents discussed and voted on their priorities. In addition to interviews conducted throughout the county, input was gathered by surveys that were distributed at events and other venues around the county as well as made available via a dedicated website. The survey gathered the views of 655 residents and business owners.

The end product is a set of long-term goals and plans for Kershaw County that the vast majority of citizens recognize as their own and support wholeheartedly. VisionKershaw 2030 is meant to be realized over a fifteen-year period. Not all the suggested strategies can be accomplished in the first years of the vision. Given resource availability, leaders review and prioritize activities as resources become available. At the heart of the vision is a set of eight core goals: Economic Growth, Land Use, County Services, Infrastructure and Transportation, Education, Recreation, and Culture and Health. By consistently focusing our attention on these community-developed goals and their respective implementation strategies, we effectively drive our decision-making and shape our community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Goal: Maintain an environment that encourages current and future businesses to thrive	
Objective 1	Invest in infrastructure
Objective 2	Develop and maintain a trained workforce <i>*accomplished by the Kershaw County School Board adding a new Applied Technology Education Center on the existing Central Carolina Technical College campus</i>
Objective 3	Attract new businesses and industries
Objective 4	Leverage tourism as an economic development engine
Objective 5	Leverage the equine industry as an economic development engine
Objective 6	Retain the County's place as one of the most profitable agricultural counties in the state <i>*accomplished by planning for a new permanent centralized farmers market</i>

LAND USE	
Goal: Shape a built and natural environment that allows the counties communities to flourish	
Objective 1	Preserve and enhance unique aspects of communities
Objective 2	Protect water quality and ecosystems
Objective 3	Establish and maintain green spaces for public use <i>*accomplished by adding new fields, bathrooms, concessions, parking, and improving road access to existing county recreational facility</i>
Objective 4	provide an environment for affordable, attractive, and safe housing options
Objective 5	Utilize Lake Wateree and Wateree River as focal resource zones <i>*accomplished this by the county government purchasing property along the Wateree River to ensure equal access to the river</i>
Objective 6	Encourage sustainable agriculture and forestry

COUNTY SERVICE EXCELLENCE	
Goal: Deliver Public Services That Are Responsive to Community Needs	
Objective 1	Ensure customers' satisfaction with public services <i>*Improved information-sharing to the public with a new website and enhanced focus on social media</i>
Objective 2	Building long-term fiscal strength
Objective 3	Foster a "One County" <i>*reestablishing the county's Human Relations Commission</i>
Objective 4	Increase access to services, personnel, and information <i>*Expanded EMS stations into underserved areas of the county</i>
Objective 5	Keep people safe in their communities
Objective 6	Ensure fair and accessible justice systems

EDUCATION	
Goal: Provide opportunities for all individuals to realize their full educational potential	
Objective 1	Support the growth & development of children and Youth
Objective 2	Offer world-class educational facilities and education providers <i>*unified the community to pass a \$129 million school board facility bond referendum and penny sales tax just two years after it originally failed</i>
Objective 3	Support a culture that values learning and the economic impact it promotes
Objective 4	Cultivate a culture of lifelong learning
Objective 5	Infuse STEAM as transformational educational opportunities <i>*Kershaw County School District returned STEAM oriented class options to their curriculum</i>

HEALTH	
Goal: Transform the way Kershaw County citizens think and act to improve health outcomes	
Objective 1	Provide an environment that promotes a healthy life
Objective 2	Sustain a network of integrated and effective health and human services across the county <i>*start a mobile food pantry to address our county's food deserts</i>
Objective 3	Connect underserved and vulnerable communities to the resources that support their health and well-being <i>*secured additional and ongoing support for the Community Medical Clinic</i>

RECREATION	
Goal: Expand and promote opportunities for recreation	
Objective 1	Provide opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy recreation
Objective 2	Develop comprehensive network of recreational trails, greenways, and paths <i>*accomplished by paving a new ADA compliant walking trail connecting two existing parks – called Sweet Gum Trail and completed a detail study and plan for a pedestrian corridor encompassing not only a food desert but an identified area of need Wildwood Lane Pedestrian and Greenway Plan</i>
Objective 3	Market recreational opportunities

CULTURE	
Goal: Celebrate and share who we are as a county through expansion and promotion of opportunities for cultural enrichment	
Objective 1	Recognize that each person has a story to tell, encourage residents to connect with one another and their communities
Objective 2	Make Kershaw County a destination for cultural enrichment, leisure, entertainment, and the arts
Objective 3	Preserve, enhance, and market Kershaw County's unique character

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION	
Goal: Invest in quality transportation and utility infrastructure	
Objective 1	Meet current and future need for quality transportation
Objective 2	Leverage existing & planned utility infrastructure for growth
Objective 3	Develop county airport as Gateway Industrial Park

*annotates achievements & outcomes

What was once a county-led initiative has turned into a community-engaged effort. VisionKershaw 2030 is managed by the Core Team, which is a community-led group who continue to be ambassadors for the plan. The composition of the Core Team reflects the diversity of the county. The vision document is the measuring stick for our success, and is used by many local groups, organizations, companies, and governmental bodies to plan for our future.

Each year, the Core Team reaches back out to our county's citizens to gauge the achievement of the vision plan. A survey of measured objectives from the past year is created, and county citizens are encouraged to give feedback. Surveys are made available online, and are placed strategically across the county, at key social service provider locations and libraries. During our initial creation of the vision, we received over 650 responses to the survey. At the end of the first year (2016), the Core Team only received feedback from approximately 150 citizens. However,

after diligent work and promotion, at the end of the second year (2017) the Core Team was able to gather over 400 survey responses with 77% of them being new respondents. The Core Team, as well as the vision document, continues to evolve. The enthusiasm and recognition of VisionKershaw 2030 is high, the use of and referencing of the vision is ever increasing, and the effort to achieve the goals set forth by our citizens has been tremendous.

The vision inspired questions about how to be equitable in gathering input. One question we asked ourselves was, “How do we reach the citizens not normally involved?” We addressed this by taking the effort to them. It was a robust community input process, conducted to collect ideas and attitudes from county residents, and business owners. The public engagement process was widely advertised, through methods including a dedicated website, press releases, direct mailings, flyers, newspaper articles and word of mouth. The process, conducted from July to December 2015. We also asked ourselves was “How do we get the younger generation involved?” To address this, the Core Team reached out to Junior Leadership Kershaw County. This is a program coordinated by the Kershaw County Chamber of Commerce, offering leadership education to a select group of high school students. These students are chosen by their schools based on academic achievement and campus involvement. The program hosts approximately 30 students each year. The Core Team asked these students to participate in the data collection portion of the effort. The team first engaged the students in a three-hour workshop geared entirely at gathering as much feedback as possible from the students, who were very receptive to sharing their ideas. Students even invited the team to a follow-up session to revisit the workshop’s findings. We used this opportunity to report our findings to the students, and to reengage them further. This follow-up also resulted in Junior Leadership taking the initiative to put together a 5-7 minute presentation for Kershaw County Council, explaining their thoughts on the vision. The effect on both parties was immeasurable and an ongoing dialogue was established. This exchange showed our youth that their opinions matter. In addition, having the public and council listen to them will hopefully inspire a new group of community leaders and decision makers. The Core Team will continue to seek feedback from this group, as these students are our future leaders.

The list of accomplishments continues to grow with each passing year. The success of the vision would not have come to fruition without all of the hard work by many different groups and citizens, who were and are committed to ensuring its success.

VisionKershaw 2030 is alive and well. Every year since its creation, VisionKershaw 2030 has been adopted by all local municipalities. Kershaw County Council even sets aside time in their annual retreat to discuss how the suggested budget requests align with the vision plan. Because of this, over the past several budget cycles, we have had a very focused budget, which is also consistent with the vision plan. Additionally, Kershaw County Council makes sure its goals and objectives for the coming year complement and use language directly from VisionKershaw 2030. In addition, numerous private enterprises and public entities have not only incorporated the vision, but also actively reference the document in long range planning and annual budget discussions.

Project Contact:
Michael Conley
Director, Planning and Zoning Department

Kershaw County
515 Walnut Street, Room 160
Camden, SC 29020
(803) 425-7233, Ext. 7
michael.conley@kershaw.sc.gov